



The Red Book: Liber Novus

C.G. Jung , Sonu Shamdasani (Editor) , Mark Kyburz (Translator) , John Peck (Translator)

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When Carl Jung embarked on an extended self-exploration he called it his “confrontation with the unconscious,” the heart of it was *The Red Book*, a large, illuminated volume he created between 1914 and 1930. Here he developed his principle theories—of the archetypes, the collective unconscious, and the process of individuation—that transformed psychotherapy from a practice concerned with treatment of the sick into a means for higher development of the personality.

While Jung considered *The Red Book* to be his most important work, only a handful of people have ever seen it. Now, in a complete facsimile and translation, it is available to scholars and the general public. It is an astonishing example of calligraphy and art on a par with *The Book of Kells* and the illuminated manuscripts of William Blake. This publication of *The Red Book* is a watershed that will cast new light on the making of modern psychology.

212 color illustrations.

The Red Book: Liber Novus Details

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Author : C.G. Jung , Sonu Shamdasani (Editor) , Mark Kyburz (Translator) , John Peck (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Red Book: Liber Novus for online ebook

Isabelle says

Opening this book is like entering a magical world of wonders. It is an adventure in and of itself.

I am so glad the public can finally see this notebook.

I even think the size serves the purpose: a very large volume comparable to some kind of rare Medieval book that you would need a beautifully ornate lectern for!!!

And then there is the text, illuminated as it is... it is more powerful.

Cedar says

"All the works of man have their origin in creative fantasy. What right have we then to depreciate imagination." CG JUNG

Beautiful Beautiful book. Jung was truly a talented man, who was and is respected in his field.

Some people have left negative reviews regarding the packaging. It is a big book, but It needs to be to show the plates that is Jungs own handwriting. I wouldn't have it any other way. In saying that tho it is awkward. Maybe the publishers should have included a smaller book with just the english translation so you can read it whilst enjoying the full thing.

However that said, i don't rate a book by its cover. I might not read it, but it will never impact the rating, as that's not really anything to do with the content and the ideas of the author. So one star woman further down the list, I am unsure how you can give so much love to the late Jung, and then provide a one star...

Jung's idea of the collective unconscious is something that has been widely discussed. This is quite an interesting topic as it is what caused Jung and Freud to split from their shared work and beliefs and branch out into their own.

Jung was often challenged by his own unconscious, as he himself would put it, hearing voices and seeing visions. This book is a record of one of those periods. Jung's art through the book is quite beautiful; it is also important to the writing, as one of his beliefs was that Art is a healing tool to be used. The calligraphy to die for. His message through history important.

Yes the book is expensive. But its worth it....

"Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better take things as they come along with patience and equanimity."
CG JUNG

Sultan76 says

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Tait says

12.1.09

I couldn't sleep last night, as inspired as I was having begun to read Carl Jung's *Liber Novus*, his "Red Book." My first impression is that this is a massive tome; at 16x12x2" it is easily the largest book I've ever laid hand on, and just turning the pages takes a substantial effort. But it's well worth it.

The Liber Novus is Jung's account of his decades long process of psychological and subconscious self experimentation, through a technique called "active imagination;" a process that he claimed was the seeds to all his work. Written first in a series of Black Books, this masterpiece was later painstakingly copied into a red leather-bound book, though never finished. And by copy I mean create an entire illuminated manuscript, complete with exquisite calligraphy and full color mandala and dream illustrations, that Jung worked on till

his fascination with alchemy took hold, and then sat in a box until long after he died.

This first edition presents not just a translation of the text (by Jung scholar Sonu Shamdasani), but a full facsimile of the original folio plates, which have been kept in a safe deposit box unlooked at for the last 80 years and so are in excellent condition. The edition also includes critical apparatuses; a historical essay to contextualize the significance of the *Liber Novus* in Jung's life and work (and was the main thrust to convince the Society for the Heirs of Jung to finally let the book be published), as well as paratextual citations to highlight the variety of references in the manuscript itself, which should make the read that much more insightful.

Flipping through the folio I was struck by the richness of the illustrations, some of which I would consider masterpieces in themselves, filled with fractals, swirling colors, archetypal situations, and a surreal dream-sense that was apparently under-appreciated by the Surrealists. The calligraphy is in German, which I unfortunately don't speak, and can only comment on the precise appearance of.

As for the text itself, that will be my next attempt. I will say that it begins with the title: "The way of what is to come," along with some prophetic quotations from Isaiah, and much of it is in dialogue form between Jung and his spirit guide (in the tradition of Mephistopheles), placing the work as a modern take of the tradition of revelatory literature, which isn't so far off considering the inclusion of Jung's dreams prophesying the World Wars.

On the whole, the book seems to be Jung's attempt to reconcile the scientific with the mythic and spiritual, the personal with collective, and as such could not be more timely than to finally see the light of people's eyes. As a writer interested in the use of dreams and personal narratives, as well as having taken this process to my own experimental, revelatory, self-mythology and understand the danger of attempting vs. the incredibly potent imagery that can come out of such a process, I suspect the *Liber Novus* may have far reaching cultural effects that we could only begin to imagine.

12.11.09

I finally started reading the text of Jung's Red Book last night, and it is as revelatory, revolutionary, and vitally important as I suspected it would be, not just in terms of Jung's psychological theories but in taking a stance for a broader spiritual approach to reality that is even more lacking now than when Jung was writing. Reading this is like reading Blake, I want to quote every passage (as they are almost all brilliant), but if my cat will get off the tome I'll look at some of the important symbols and themes that Jung was attempting to articulate.

The spirit of the times vs. the spirit of the depths - Jung makes a distinction between the spirit or stance of the time in which he lives vs. the spirit of a greater, ancient, and universal reality that is entirely overlooked by the present, and is striving to come forth through Jung. This is historical consciousness vs. the mythic subconsciousness, and Jung frames the Red Book as a way of getting past all the small-minded, violent, materialistic impulses of his age (including a harsh criticism of Christianity), while recognizing that this present world may entirely ignore his warning and call for an understanding of the subconscious.

The supreme meaning - Jung claims that God and gods are only images of an eternal supreme meaning oscillating between meaning and absurdity, and it is this supreme meaning that men must come to recognize as a solution to the spirit of the times. This is entirely consistent with my concept of ultimate significance, in that the supreme meaning is more truly real than the images we conceive of it through.

Dreams and epiphanic visions - Jung recounts a number of visions prophesying the world wars as well as his

own future work. He claims an uncontrollable compulsion to record these dreams, though he never did before. Similarly, a number of the passages Jung claims are actually the spirit of the depths or his soul speaking through him as a medium.

The soul - Much of the early part of this book is Jung's attempt to reconnect with his soul. This is the formation of his archetype of the anima/animus, but it is not made explicit in his academic writings that the archetype is not just an image but one's actual, living soul, which encourages us to live and do everything we dream of living and doing. The soul is one's God and opposite, which perfects us in the supreme meaning. The soul is not part of us, we are only the expression and symbol of our soul in the world.

The desert - Though Jung's academic writings discuss the archetypes they do not discuss (as far as I've read) the importance of subconscious locations. In particular Jung discusses here the image of the desert, which is the conception of oneself and soul that one must journey into and rejuvenate in order to overcome the spirit of the times. Jung believes he saw a desert because his soul had been withered (and perhaps those in touch with their souls experience a garden). From my own explorations of the subconscious I also found this "desert of the soul" as the location for the deeper, mythic realities I had to contend with outside of the city (the symbol for the everyday world and times). As my own process continued, this desert was first flooded and became a garden before the entire inner world was set to flames so that a new internal reality could form. I am curious how these locations change through Jung's process in the remainder of the *Red Book*, as I find such psychogeographies an essential compliment to the character archetypes.

The descent into hell - Jung has a vision in which he realizes that he must descend to hell in order to individuate himself and find the supreme meaning. Such *descensus avernum* are common in mythic and revelatory literature and serve as another example of the importance of place as symbol for Jung's theories. Jung equates this descent with the possibility of going mad, and sees himself as a sacrificed hero who must overcome that potential madness for a more divine madness lacking in the spirit of the times. This section (and the titles of the other sections) suggest that Jung is on a hero's journey comparable to that described by Joseph Campbell. This hell is all the absurd meaninglessness of our times that we must go through in order to construct our own meaning of events, which is the supreme meaning.

Foad says

Karen says

I read an article about this book and Carl Jung in the New York Times Magazine, and I'm dying to read it now. This is a facsimile of a book that Jung wrote and illustrated in which he recorded his dreams and visions when he went through some sort of psychotic breakdown, and it sounds both completely bizarre and absolutely fascinating. If you look at the book on Amazon, you can see some of the images; they look like something out of a cross between Lord of the Rings and some ancient and obscure religion. I probably won't be reading it soon since it's very expensive, but some day, I definitely want to take a look at it.

Here's the article if you're interested: [The Holy Grail of the Unconscious](#)

Here's a link to it on Amazon; take a look at the images:

[Red Book](#)

So, I finally got a copy (from the library) the illustrations are amazing; the text is rather bizarre. I didn't really read it; I mostly just looked at the pictures. ;)

Lisa says

Interested in symbolism, mythology and archetypes, I started reading Jung in my 20's. When this book came out, I had to own it, despite the price and its huge size. The timing is good for me, being in my early 50's and trying to let go of whom I think (or others think) I should be, versus being who I am. This book was Jung's personal diary as he struggled with integrating his own 'dark side' and was kept from publication by his family for many years. Just the act of reading it - propped awkwardly from the base of my thighs to my knees, sucking in my waist to turn each page - is a journey in itself. The first 1/3 of the book contains actual scans of Jung's book, written in ornate script with paintings of some of his dreams or waking visions and illuminated like ancient manuscripts. I took my time going from page to page, absorbing the art. Now, the second 1/3 of the book contains background information on Jung's life, philosophies and studies, which is preparing me for the final 1/3 - a translation of Jung's text.

This is not light reading by any stretch of the imagination. But I have a feeling it will be transformational for me at this crossroad in my life.

Janet says

An interrupted read--this book is so personal and ephemeral, a blakean diary of personal discovery, completely inside one man's symbol system, written for himself. I'm about a third of the way through the body of the text--there's also a long introduction. It's already inspired me to go back to keeping a dream journal, to think of what my own 'red book' would be. Dream life has become extremely active. But it lacks any quality of suspense or forward motion. I have a friend who has the big book--the facsimile Red Book, 18" by 12, weighing in at 8 pounds, with all the illustrations Jung painted to accompany the hand-lettered journal--she has to keep it on a footstool it's so big. This is the translation of the text, which is fascinating and boring and strange, by turns, just like Blake's longer poems. Meeting the soul, meeting the anima/animus, it's the laboratory of Jung's own theories--and like a live album, there's a lot of drum solos. Yet its remarkable to see the naked material arising, see him struggle with the contents of his own psyche

before it's all processed and theorized.

Ed Smiley says

I have no idea how to rank this book, nor am I even quite sure what the hell I read.

Although I know a little German, I read the accompanying English text. However one thing is certain, the experience was powerful, and the impact of the combination of the hand lettering, calligraphy and the careful illuminations with a bewildering flood of psychic imagery is something not to be forgotten.

Here's a sample:

The noise of the days of the world falls silent and the warming fire blazes inside.

Sitting at the fire, the shades of those gone before wail softly and give news of the past.

Come to the solitary fire, you blind and lame ones and hear both kinds of truth: the blind will be lamed and the lame will be blinded, yet the shared fire warms both in the lengthening night.

An old secret fire burns between us, giving sparse light and ample warmth.

The primordial fire that conquers every necessity shall burn again, since the night of the world is wide and cold and the need is great.

The well protected fire brings together those from far away and those who are cold; those who do not see each other and those who cannot reach each other, and it conquers suffering and shatters need.

The words uttered at the fire are ambiguous and deep and show life the right way.

The blind shall be lamed, so that he will not run into the abyss, and the lame shall be blind, so that he will not look at things beyond his reach with longing and contempt.

Both may be aware of their deep helplessness so that they will respect the holy fire again, as well as the shade sitting at the hearth, and the words that encircle the flames.

hayatem says

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Miriam says

This was described when I ordered it as a facsimile edition of Jung's notebooks

That is not at all the case. It is a typed and annotated version of his text, **without** the pictures. Since both Jung and the editor are discussing the images, trying to read a book about pictures one hasn't seen seems fairly pointless. The only use I can see for this volume is as a neatly printed read-long for someone who does have a facsimile edition.

?tefan Bolea says

Clearly Nietzschean, inspired by esoteric Christianity, alchemy and Tarot and written by a spirit different (perhaps stronger) than Nietzsche. Some of Jung's ideas are developed in Meyrink's work as well. A piece of experimental psychology with a touch of Medievalism in it. I'm not very fond of the parodic and satirical pages.

Bryan says

Yes, for us Carl Jung fans this book is the Grail, but really it is kind of a let down. Aesthetically this book is the revelation all of us hoped it would be. The paper, the typography, the reproductions are scrumptious. (Yes, I ate them.)

But there is a little bit of the presentation that leaves me head scratching. There is sort of this "introduction to Carl Jung," section and I think to myself, why would anyone interested in this book need an introduction to Carl Jung? And let's be serious: this is Jung's dream journal. There's your content. I loved looking at the pictures. If you wanted something else you are barking up the wrong tree.

Speaking of the pictures, I was struck by similarity to Crowley & Harris' Thoth tarot deck. That tightly wound bear trap is where I am going to leave it.

Christine says

Only a few books read in a lifetime actually change you. Can you honestly say you are a different person after the work is absorbed? I feel that my cells have been re-charged with a new vitality.

The Red Book is a lovingly inscribed and illustrated account of a deep inner journey into the heart of god, spirituality, mythology, and primarily the depths that Jung called the Shadow. Within only a few pages I was struck by many synchronicities - (another term coined by Jung) - specific details that connected with scary precision to my own recent ideas, dreams, and other reading.

I put aside writing and other projects and devoted my spare time to The Red Book. Some of the text is heady, analytical stuff to slog through, but much of it is hilarious. Jung's encounters with his soul, Salome, and other mythic beings inside his unconscious read like epic spats, with lots of grumbling and cajoling.

Inspired by Jung's process of 'active imagination,' I opened my mind and heart to encounter what I might find in my own deep unconscious. Fascinated, frightened and yet determined to uncover what was lurking inside, driving my judgments and conflicts, I spent 4 months in my own 'depths.' This process opened a deep, sobering vein of understanding and growth. It's the best work I've ever done, without a therapist or guru -

only The Red Book as a road map.

Jung took on his courageous work nearly 100 years ago. I was struck by similarities between his time and ours, from interest in the metaphysical to unrest and uncertainty. It was the foundation of so much exploration - the collective unconscious, mandalas, anima/animus, etc. - Jung's great ideas that our generation takes for granted.

I will celebrate his contribution by living my own life, my way. And with the hope that the jewels I found in my journey will make a difference, too.

Kraig Grady says

Already the Book has broaden my feel for a man whose works i spent 10 years reading. This is 2/3 of the collected works. My dreams intensified by just looking at the paintings of really a remarkable and underrated visual artist. It might be the sequel to Blake's 'Island in the moon' in spirit and not an reference to the style. It changes the meaning of that Blake's work for me. CGJ has always been a path of precognitive and synchronistic experience. I don't see how it cannot alter the reader or even the world. It might be the last book of this kind.
